MALMÖ HÖGSKOLA
Hälsa och samhälle

Perceptions of a Sample of Convicted Offenders of Child Pornography receiving Treatment at a Community-based Therapeutic Programme in Cape Town, Western Cape, South Africa

by

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Abstract

This study is based on interviews with a sample of South African offenders who were convicted in terms of the Film & Publications Act, No. 65 of 1996 and the Film and Publications Amendment Act, No 34 of 1999 that addresses the issue of child pornography. Semi structured interviews were undertaken with a small sample of men who are convicted child pornographers. These men all participated in a community-based treatment programme for sex offenders as a condition of their sentence and conviction. Their participation in the programme is court mandated for varying periods of between 36 months to five years. Purposive sampling was used to recruit the respondents and they were all approached to participate in the study because of their convictions. All the respondents were provided information on ethical clearance and could withdraw from the study at any time.

This study focussed on assessing the perceptions of the respondents with regards to their ideas about child pornography and whether they viewed themselves as paedophiles or child abusers. The respondents were also asked to report on how they perceived themselves after the conviction for this offence. I found that the attitudes of their offences seen as an abusive act towards children were extremely vague, if existing. There also seemed to be a common manifestation of a certain reason that influenced to a deviant behaviour without previous sexual interest towards children. Indeed, when discussing paedophilia and contact offences there was a notable repudiation. To acknowledge the offenders self perception through intervention, suitably addressed on the actual needs of the offenders, prevention can be achieved.

Keywords: Child Pornography, Child Sexual Abuse, Sex offender, Self-perception, Paedophilia

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

Recognition and awareness of sexual abuse of children has grown extensively over the past two decades amongst both professional and lay communities world wide. From being a largely unnoticed and hidden problem, it now commands the attention of governments and the media as a major social problem (Taylor & Quayle, 2003).

Until recently child pornography was not seen as a significant contributory factor in the perpetration of child sexual abuse and, if it was recognised, it was seen as a lesser symptom of a much broader and more significant problem (Taylor & Quayle, 2003). Although little is known of the role that child pornography might play in the sexual abuse of children, in a South African context, there has been a dramatic change in the nature of child pornography, in terms of access to it and its distribution. Associated with this, child pornography has progressed from general obscurity to gain massive media and political attention. The issue of child pornography has become a major area of law enforcement activity and parallel social concern (Internet, 2009). However, relatively little is known about it and existing research in this area is limited. In this thesis I will ask questions about its nature, its relationship with child sexual abuse and the offenders' perception of the crime.

Child pornography is a growing concern in South Africa and is evidenced by increasing arrests in this regard (Londt, 2008). New legislation has been developed to deal with those individuals who create, possess or distribute sexually explicit images involving children. In South Africa the prosecution and investigation of individuals who engage in pornographic images of children has increased over the last three years. There is a local view that those individuals who use the internet as a medium to obtain illegal sexual material, like child pornography, should be considered as a category in their own right. Londt (2008) argues that insufficient knowledge and research exists to accurately determine whether these men are child molesters, paedophiles or simply a sub set of sexually aggressive men.

1.1. Background and Orientation of this study

According to Meeuwisse & Swärd (2002) a social problem violates or interferes with cultural values that define what is good, important and desirable in a social system. Further more, they define a social problem as something that increases and where intervention is possible and necessary. Therefore, child pornography is a burning question and a significant topic for social work. Hence the writer concurs that the implication should also transcend mere knowing and provide the 'to do activities' that will address the problem

Worldwide there are almost daily news reports of arrests of individuals either for the possession or the creating of child pornography (Taylor & Quayle, 2003). In South Africa, the prosecution and the investigation of individuals who engage in pornographic images of children has increased dramatically over the last three years within the Western Cape (Londt, 2008). A community based treatment programme run by Child Abuse Therapeutic and Training Services (CATTS), appears to be the main point of engaging new convicts. Londt (2008) concurs that, offenders with violations in terms of the Film and Publications Act as well as the Amendments present with particular challenges and insights.

Governments and the media portray child pornography as a major social problem worldwide. This is not a simple topic since enquiries into pornography inevitably leads to questions about those who ask it. Castells makes the following point, *"It is easier to blame the messenger than to question the sources of the message"* (Taylor & Quayle, 2003, p212). According to him, the globalisation of markets is one factor that contributes to the development of child pornography. However, in this study I will focus on the *messenger* in a South African context with the legislation of South Africa. I refer to *the viewer* as the *messenger*.

My interest in this topic resulted in me securing an internship because I wanted to study the subjects who participated in the CATTS community-based treatment programme. I engaged with the Director of the project in order to access respondents for my research enquiry.

I was introduced to the scope and phenomenon of child pornography during this internship. There are several reasons why Cape Town and the organization

CATTS were suitable for this study. The statistics for sexual violence towards children is a well-known and well-researched issue. Hence Cape Town has been referred to as 'Rape Town' in the media because of the high incidence of sexual violence towards children. During my international placement in South Africa a spate of arrests occurred in terms of individuals who violated the contraventions of the Film & Publications Act, No. 65 of 1996 and the Film and Publications Amendment Act, No 34 of 1999.

The CATTS programme is the only community-based programme that offers intervention services to alleged and convicted sex offenders (see appendix 1). The programme is based on approximately 26 years of expertise and practice with this population of clients. In fact, he founder of CATTS, is regarded as a leading profile and a known sex crime expert nationally as well as internationally. According to Londt, (2008), the idea of managing the behaviour of sex offenders can be a way to redress the devastation they bring to the lives of the victims and those around them. The dissatisfaction of the society about sentencing and the overall response to sex offenders by the criminal justice system is the argument often provided that treatment or management of sex offenders is futile because they are not amenable to intervention.

After a process of selection and screening, I was allowed to participate as an observer in some of the programme's activities during my initial arrival in Cape Town. The Director assisted me in gaining access to the respondents and ensured that I complied with the relevant standards of ethical research and practice.

1.2. Problem Formulation

The massive media and political attention has defined child pornography as a major social problem (Internet, 2009). Although remarkably little knowledge is available about the phenomenon, in order to understand its impact and protect our children, I decided to focus on defining child pornography while examining its nature and impact on child sexual abuse.

There appears to be arguments about whether those individuals who use child pornography should be viewed as paedophiles or child molesters because of the harmfulness of child pornography to children. Seto (2005) has undertaken

research to respond to this question. In South Africa, the legislation, namely, The Film & Publications Act, No. 65 of 1996 and the Film and Publications Amendment Act, No 34 of 1999 defines child pornography as: *Possession, Creation* and *Production* of sexually explicit images of children

Many arguments exist about why adults would find it pleasurable to use erotic images of children. The questions also exist whether these adults perceive themselves as having harmed children or whether they have sexual preoccupations with children. Why does it occur? Is it the increased media attention or increased internet access or both? What is it that sustains the behaviour of possessing and creating child pornography, exposing those involved to what is a very real risk of a long prison sentence, if caught? These are the questions that led me to formulate research questions that could be posed to adults who hold a conviction in terms of this legislation.

Hence, in this study I will examine the offenders' view of the phenomenon, the process will focus on the offenders and their self-perceptions. I will seek to analyse their behaviour to achieve further insight into some of the questions about this issue. A special focus will be directed at defining child pornography, examining its nature and influence on the sexual abuse of children.

1.3. Aim and Research Questions

The overall aim of this research is to assess how those adults who have been convicted for child pornography view themselves and their perception of child sexual abuse according to their offence. The questions that I have formulated will hopefully highlight some of the questions I pose.

Another main aim is to use the information gleaned from these offenders in order to shape the way we think about intervention with those individuals who harm children or pose a threat to the well being of children.

The main questions for my research are:

1. What does the respondent view as child pornography? What is the offender's perception of child pornography?

2. How does respondent perceive himself against this conviction? Does the offender understand his behaviour psychologically?

3. Does the respondent believe that they pose the same risk to children as a paedophile or child molester? Does the offender see any harm in possessing or creating child pornography, in terms of child sexual abuse?

1.4. Delimitations

Some of the main limitations of this project are:

1. The sample size is very limited since only three respondents participated; hence the results may not be applicable to all persons convicted for child pornography.

2. The respondents were all court mandated to the intervention programme (CATTS); hence they may have felt obligated to participate despite being informed about the ethics of research and that they could withdraw from it at anytime.

3. Literature sources on the topic remains tentative which makes it difficult to extrapolate across the major debates that exist on the topic.

4. The sample only used male respondents since they were the only ones available.

1.5. Research Methodology

To realize the aim that was set for this study, I chose to use a qualitative research method. The study includes a field study, made possible by the Minor Field Study grant from SIDA, the Swedish International Development Agency. The core of the study is the interviews conducted in the field in Cape Town, South Africa.

1.5.1. Sampling

For the purposes of this study I used purposive sampling, which means that these respondents were the only ones available that suited the criteria for inclusion in this project.

The respondents were participating in the CATTS intervention programme as part of their sentences, which made it easier for me to conduct interviews with reflection on themselves and their previous actions in a self-critical approach

1.5.2. Data Collection

I used a semi-structured method, as I wanted to establish how the respondents understood their world and their life (Svensson & Starrin, 1996). The interviews and the observations were done during the period of February and March in 2009. The material consists of data primarily obtained through interviewing three offenders convicted for possession and creation of child pornography. The observations were accomplished at CATTS group therapy sessions several times in the period mentioned above.

1.5.3. Interviews

I used semi-structured interviews to examine the respondents' self perception, which made changes of the sequence and forms of questions possible in order to double check the answers given. The interview guide (see appendix 2) I obtained was an outline of topics to be covered towards the aim of the study in purpose to settle the interview questions (see appendix 3). The guide can be seen as a set of clear instructions while still leaving room for following up new leads. The semi structured interviews worked well as I was interviewing respondents that I was familiar with. The interviews took 45-60 minutes each and were performed in English.

After continuous consultation with the Programme Director, I formulated the relevant questions for the interviews. I also used scripts to ensure confidentiality.

The interviews were conducted in agreement with the respondents, my motives and intentions were clarified and the respondents were assured anonymity and confidentially.

The added advantage was that I had been participating in the CATTS programme as a facilitator for some time before the interviews. The respondents felt comfortable and spoke openly about the phenomenon and how it impacted on

their lives. As indicated in the interview guide, the same questions were put to all three respondents.

1.5.4. Participation Observation

Prior to the study and towards the end of my internship participatory observations guided my understanding of this clientele group. At first, I was concerned about my participation in the interviews as I was unsure whether I would be able to meet with the offenders as fellow human beings or whether I would despise them.

During my supervision and consultations with the Programme Director, I addressed my attitudes and perceptions of the respondents to ensure that I engaged with them respectfully.

The aim of the observations was to keep the environment as normal as possible while observing the interaction and gaining insights about the phenomenon as an insider. There were more or less 15 offenders participating in each session.

According to Denscombe (1998), I focused on depth rather than width in my material. By using an open observation, I was able to detect the details, the subtleties and the complexities of the social context. My identity as a student and the aim of the study was known in the group therefore, I could focus on examining the culture and the interaction in a very detailed way.

1.5.5. Ethical Aspects

To consider the moral implications in my empirical material I started with the Kvales (1996) guideline when considering informed consent, confidentiality and the role of the researcher. The guideline gave me some principle directions to begin with. Throughout the study I considered the individual protection according to Kaijser & Öhlander (1999), which gives the respondent the right to confidentiality and anonymity and the right to information of the aim of the material. With this permission from the respondent I considered to accomplish the research. According to the University of Malmö, it was not necessary to consider the ethical aspects further or to get an approval from the ethics committee because the respondents were under confidential and anonymous identity.

1.6 Respondents

The core of this study is the interviews with the respondents, three offenders convicted for possession and creation of child pornography. The interviews were conducted in agreement with the respondents. The motives and intentions of the study were clarified and the confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents were assured. The choice of respondents was relatively easy as the 3 chosen men, who had relevance to the aim of the study, were participating in the CATTS programme at the time. For the purposes of this study the respondents will be referred to as A, B and C in order to ensure their anonymity and privacy.

1.6.1. Respondent A

A is 41 years old and works in the property industry. He offended two years ago but was only convicted recently. He was single at the time that the offences took place but is currently in a live-in relationship. At the time of the offence he was going through a traumatic period as a result of a divorce. On weekends he would use drugs while watching online adult pornography. He continued this behaviour on weekends for a period of three months before he switched to child pornographic websites. "*The adult porn made me want to explore younger and younger girls*". He mainly viewed sites of teenage girls or the age of puberty (12 years onwards). He, however, became addicted to child pornography; "*it's like a drug*," he said.

1.6.2. Respondent B

B is 50 years old. He was a businessman who held a senior position in his field but who decided to resign after the charges were laid against him. He was in a relationship when the charges were laid. He is currently re-married to a supportive wife. He alleges that his prior marriage ended in a traumatic divorce and that it was during this period that he began to watch child pornography. His behaviour continued for a period of 2 years before he was arrested. The ages of the children were around 5-6 years of age.

1.6.3. Respondent C

C is a 53 year old, married man with a steady job. He went through a traumatic period in his life and had to deal with the situation unsupported. During this period he started watching adult pornographic websites which eventually led to

child pornographic pictures. The ages of the children were around 15-16 years of age

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Child pornography is an emotive topic with moral values and the literature is limited and objective. Because of the need to understand and define certain perceptions and other related factors of this problematic phenomenon, I have sought to use relevant sources and up to date research on the issue. The research of Seto & Ekes (2005) on police data that documents child pornography offences is one of those sources. Their research aims to establish what distinguishes those individuals who solely view child pornography from those who proceed to commit an active offence. Taylor & Quayle (2003) examine how child pornography is used and indentify the social context. They look at offending behaviour to better understand and deal with the process of offending. A further explanation will follow in the analysis section.

In order to examine the aim of the study two main theories of child sexual abuse are highlighted. Empirical adequacy alone does not provide a sufficient basis for an evaluation process. Theories are indispensable resources that provide a framework for assessment by noting the difficulties offenders are likely to experience. I will review the *Cognitive Distortions*, as single-factor theory and *Finkelhor's Precondition Model*, as a multi-factor theory (Ward, Polaschek & Beech, 2006). The theoretical framework for the study is based on child sexual abuse, which I decided to follow as a medium for child pornography. I used the theories to ascertain and understand the impact of child pornography. A further explanation will follow in the analysis section.

This definition is complicated and when one separates the terms *child* and *pornography* they sometimes perform contradictory meanings. The ways that we define what it is to be a child are socially and temporally situated, as are views about the appropriateness of adult sexual interest in children and what constitutes pornography.

Sexual activity in the context of child pornography has a much wider meaning than its ordinary usage. The mere presence of a person under the age of 18 years in the same image or frame, for instance, of sexual conduct between obvious adults, could amount to child pornography. Showing or describing the body or parts of the body of a person under the age of 18 years in such a manner as to amount to sexual exploitation would also constitute child pornography. The possession, creation, production and attempts to access child pornography are all offences under the Act, punishable, upon conviction to a maximum of 10 years imprisonment on each count. The single act of downloading child pornography, therefore, could attract a 20-year sentence (Internet, 2009).

2.1. Psychological Aspects

While drawing attention to the psychological qualities of child pornography increases our understanding of the nature of the problem, it will not necessarily solve the difficult issues related to what constitutes child pornography. Psychological approaches may help the law to be better refined or may play a part in placing into context behaviours that may be indicative of a sexual interest in children. Perhaps, child pornography is at its core about sexual fantasy but the primary reason is that the production requires a child to be sexually abused in some sense.

2.1.1. Cognitive Distortions

Cognitive distortions is the most well known variable as an individual-factor. The term *cognitive distortions* explains thinking related schemata, which provide a view of the world based on what is expected rather than what is objectively true. In a broader aetiological theory of child sexual offending, according to Abel (1984) most boys learn in childhood which

sexual arousal patterns are considered societal inappropriate, and inhabit such interest. Sometimes they still fantasise about prohibited material, and so for these boys, a pattern of deviant arousal develops that is carried into adulthood unless there is disapproval from significant others. Abel suggested that cognitive distortions are externally reinforced by masturbation, so that they apparently precede the onset of offending (Abel, 1984).

2.1.2. Finkelhor's Precondition Model

Finkelhor's Precondition Model is perhaps one of the most widely known models of child sexual abuse. According to this model four preconditions need to be met before sexual abuse can occur:

Precondition 1: Motivation to Sexually Abuse

According to Finkelhor sexual abuse of children is associated with three distinct motives:

1. *Emotional congruence* – the offender has an emotional need to relate to the children.

2. *Sexual arousal* – children are potential source of sexual gratification.

3. *Blockage* – adult sexual and emotional gratification are unavailable to the offender for a number of reasons, e.g. low social competence or/and sexual anxiety

Finkelhor (in Ward, Polaschek & Beech, 2006) mentions child pornography as hypothesises that the availability, coupled with the tendency of males to sexualise emotional needs, may also result in deviant sexual arousal towards children.

It appears that child pornography is possibly used to control or modulate negative emotions through sexual activities, such as masturbation, in order to reduce feelings of anxiety, depression or anger. As mentioned above the respondents had a trauma and a stressful period at the time of the offence. I will also mention the rejection as an emotion to consider when looking for factors that can lead to a deviant behaviour.

The key idea is that normally functioning men who experience stressful and unusual situations are unable to meet their sexual and emotional needs in adaptive ways. Finkelhor's search for causal mechanisms includes some socio-cultural variables thought to contribute to the phenomenon of blockage. One example is restrictive sexual norms concerning the nature of sexuality and its legitimate expression. It is hypothesised that restrictive sexual norms may leave some men feeling guilty about having sex with adults and as a consequence of this guilt,

avoid adult sexual relationships. Avoidance of this type can lead to seek sex with children (Ward, Polaschek & Beech, 2006).

Precondition 2: Overcoming Internal Inhibitors

The internal psychological factors include alcohol intoxication, impulse disorder, senility, psychosis, failure of the incest inhibition mechanism and the presence of severe stress. Furthermore Finkelhor points out the availability to child pornography and the inability of males to identify the needs of children are additional social mechanisms that contribute to this failure of control. Some of these disinhibiting factors are temporary while others are more enduring (Ward, Polaschek & Beech, 2006). A, expressed his failure to control: "*I was angry for letting myself get into this*".

Precondition 3: Overcoming External Inhibitors

The next step in the offence process after the individual has acquired a motive and overcome their internal inhibitions is the surmounting of external constraints or obstacles in order to create the opportunity to abuse a child sexually (Ward, Polaschek & Beech, 2006).

Precondition 4: Overcoming the Resistance of the Child

The next step in the process is to overcome any resistance from the child and an offender can use a number of strategies at this point to gain and maintain sexual access to a child. Although Finkelhor argued that most sexual behaviour involves some nonsexual motivation, he places a great emphasis on sexual arousal as a motivation and sexual preference as an important dimension of child sexual abuse (Ward, Polaschek & Beech, 2006).

2.2. The Role of Fantasy

Taylor & Quayle (2003) suggest that the core quality of any psychological approach to child pornography based on preferences of adults with a sexual interest in children will necessarily relate to fantasy. Fantasy is clearly an aspect in the distorted cognitions that underpin engagement with child pornography.

The role of fantasy in the case of adult sexual interest in children might be little understood, but in my opinion, plays a significant role in child pornography.

Howitt (in Taylor & Quayle, 2003) suggested that the idea of fantasy could be seen in two ways. First, in a psychoanalytic sense where the fantasy acts as wish-fulfilment and is therefore separate from everyday life. Second, it could be viewed as fantasy being a precursor to action. In other words, out of this we reach closer to the central question, whether child pornography leads to contact abuse. Whether or not the possession of child pornography is necessarily a precursor to a contact offence, the research is tentative, as an increasing number of offenders are coming into the criminal justice system, guilty for possession of child pornography, with no history of a contact offence.

According to Seto & Eke (2005) men who are predisposed to sexual offences are most likely to show an effect from pornography exposure. His research aims to establish what distinguishes those individuals who solely view child pornography from those who go on to commit active offence. Seto & Eke (2005) found that out of 201 child pornography offenders, 17 per cent committed some sort of crime again within a three-year period, and four per cent committed a sexual offence. The main point was that child pornography offenders with a prior criminal record were significantly more likely to re-offend in some way.

Russell (1993) suggests that the harm of pornography shows when such sentiments contribute to the undermining of some males' inhibitions, internally and socially, against acting out their desire to rape women and children. She suggests that the exposure to pornography could be one factor. Her data shows that a high percentage of non-incarcerated child molesters have said that they have been incited by pornography to commit physical crime.

Another theory suggests that paedophiles almost always collect child pornography. Lanning (in Taylor & Quayle, 2003) argued that collecting this material might help paedophiles satisfy, deal with or reinforce their compulsive, persistent sexual fantasies about children. Many people with sexual interest in children need to justify their own interest, and the availability of material to collect is one way of achieving this.

3. RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

In order to analyse the qualitative data I collected, I organized it by using category themes to make sense of the data. Throughout each theme I identified the empirical material to reflect and interpret patterns. A qualitative research is a reflection of the researcher and includes a question of interpretation in the process (Denscombe, 2000). To examine self-perception, I used the Fitts & Warrens (1996) Tennessee Self-conception Scale as a guideline. It is a widely used self-report measure consisting of five external aspects of self-concept;

- o Ethical-Moral
- o Personal
- o Social
- o Physical
- o Family

These themes are the central concepts for the self-perception analysis throughout this study.

In this section a theoretical framework combined with the empirical results from known research will be used to analyse the data. Initially child pornography will be defined in terms of relevant legislation. The Film & Publications Act, No. 65 of 1996 and the Film and Publications Amendment Act, No 34 of 1999 defines child pornography as: *Possession, Creation* and *Production* of sexually explicit images of children. The respondents were all convicted in contravention of this legislation. A brief description will be provided of the respondents in this study as well as the main themes that emerged from the interviews. The responses of the respondents will be evaluated against aspects from literature and other known material about sex offenders.

3.1. Main Themes

3.1.1. Definition of Child Pornography

In terms of the South African Legislation (Film & Publications Act 34 of 1999) child pornography is any image or depiction or description of sexual activity in

which one or more of the depicted or described is a person who is, or appears to be or is depicted or described as being under the age of 18 years.

The respondents demanded clarification on the definition and scope of child pornography. They were not sure whether some of the material they encountered could be classified as child pornography or not. In addition, they all were, at some point aware that they were viewing illegal material. A, described child pornography as disgusting and taboo but at the same time an excitement and a thrill because of the fact that it was wrong and illegal. B, mentioned the difficulty of defining the phenomenon, for instance, he watched images of naked children on a nudist beach or naked children busy cooking etc. and couldn't see anything wrong or why that could be classified as child pornography:

> *"I don't know what child pornography is, it's hard to define. I wasn't aware that the images I watched were classified as illegal. Some of the images I could tell were very bad and I thought this is not right, I thought to myself; imagine if someone knew about this" (B)*

C, also mentioned the lack of knowledge when it comes to the definition of child pornography.

3.1.1.1. Possession

Watching child pornography could constitute the offence of possession, which is an offence in terms of section 27 of the Films and Publications Act (1999), and any person convicted of such an offence could be sentenced to maximum 10 years imprisonment.

The respondents explained that the act of possession is when you view images or videos. B, said when he came across images of children in a sexual act, which he described as very bad images, he immediately closed the website. However, investigators can still trace the sites visited from the computer hard drive.

3.1.1.2. Creation

"Sometimes I didn't even look at the images, I just saved them for later", B explains. If you download child pornography from the internet, you could be charged with two offences: possession and creation. The act of downloading,

which is usually the action of "pointing and clicking" creates out of the digital information an analogue picture. Each picture downloaded would amount to a separate creation. If you download 10 pictures, you could be charged with 10 counts of possession and 10 counts of creation, and could face a maximum of 10 years imprisonment for each count. The ordinary meaning of "to create" is to bring into existence (Films & Publications Act, 1999).

The 3 respondents were all convicted for possession and creation, when downloading images or videos on a disc or DVD. A, was caught with 861 images and B, with over 1000. *"I was under stress and wasn't aware of all the pictures, I put them onto a disc to watch when needed "* (C).

3.1.1.3. Production

To produce child pornography someone has to assault a child, or pose a child in a sexualized way, and to make a photographic record of it (Taylor & Quayle, 2003).

The respondents implied that the production and the availability was a major problem and the internet as a leading source of child pornography. In fact they spoke about the production as the main problem and not the user, the viewer, in other words, themselves. C, who participated at the intervention programme longer than A and B had another approach related to the production;

> *"I became aware of the victim when I started the programme and I putted myself on the other side of the camera, I can't say the child was hurt at the time they took the picture but under the circumstances, what was in that persons mind behind the camera at the time the photo was taken?"* (C).

3.2.2. Sex and the Internet

"I will never go searching for porn on the internet again, I will completely stay away", B explains while discussing internet usage. Taylor & Quayle (2003) state that the internet has undoubtedly enhanced the sexual exploitation of children. The internet and the new technologies of chat rooms etc. are all factors that contribute to the development of child pornography with anonymity and the search for further sexual excitement in a society of normalized sexuality instigate the demand for new emotions. They highlight *metamorphosis* as a keyword

related to the internet use suggesting that the ability to self-represent from the safety of the computer screen may be part of the desire to go online. The lack of face-to-face communication ensures some level of anonymity, which according to Taylor & Quayle (2003) can reduce social risk and lower inhibitions.

Changes in the way that we think, which may result from online participation, could be a result of the decentralised nature of internet. Durkin & Bryant (in Taylor & Quayle, 2003) examined the use of the internet for the purposes of promoting deviant or criminal behaviour. They conclude that individuals are at risk of developing deviant sexual fantasies that would otherwise have self-extinguished, were it not for the immediate reinforcement provided by the internet.

When interviewing the respondents they all admitted to searching for adult *legal* pornography on the internet and in the process they crossed the line to *illegal* child pornography: "*Internet is a very dangerous area. Today I don't want to have porn",* C expressed.

3.2.3. Paedophilia

A paedophile is a person with a sexual attraction for young children and comes from all social, income, racial, gender, ethnic and age groups. Most paedophiles do not act aggressively or violently towards children but attempt to gain the child's affection and interest by being friendly, in other words, grooming, using grooming strategies to lure their victims (Van Dam, 2001).

According to Seto & Eke (2005), many child pornography offenders are not necessarily paedophiles. *"I can't relate myself to the paedophiles in the group, I'm not a paedophile. Me and my wife went to see a psychologist in Johannesburg and I got it on paper that I'm not a paedophile",* B. While interviewing the respondents I could sense the anxiety of not being included in the same category as paedophiles. The majority of the participants in the CATTS intervention programme are contact offenders. A explained the disassociation: "*As wrong as my crime was, I was not as bad as they saw me as. I was treated as a paedophile. I can't relate myself to a paedophile, I don't have their needs"* (A).

3.2.4. Legislation

South Africa's laws on child pornography are among the toughest in the world. They are one of only five countries where the legislation is considered comprehensive enough to make a significant impact against the crime. But tough laws aren't enough to deter the calculating and manipulative forces behind these global rings of terror (Internet, 2009).

All the respondents believe the legislation is good and fair to protect the children. C, said that people who hurt children should be hurt themselves. Though there is a lack of knowledge to define the phenomenon which all agreed. Child pornography is a global problem and countries have different legislations. The globalisation makes it very hard to control, as B expressed.

3.2.5. Respondents' Perceptions

3.2.5.1. Uncontrollability

Offenders believe their worlds are chaotic and uncontrollable; events just happen and behaviour is directed mainly by powerful urges and emotions. Their understanding is that their behaviour is controlled by overwhelming internal or external forces such as sexual desire, the sexual attractiveness of children, drugs, alcohol and stress etc. (Ward, Polaschek & Beech, 2006).

All three respondents mentioned a trauma as a chaotic or uncontrollable event that happened in their life, which led them into an abnormal behaviour of watching child pornography.

A, explained the period of offending as a traumatic and stressful time in his life. His life fell apart after a divorce, to deal with the situation and the pressure from work he started to use or misuse drugs. He took his time and explained very openly about the drugs and how it made him feel. While on drugs and alone he went online in search of pornography, adult pornography. After a period of three months with the same pattern he started to search for younger and younger girls.

C and B also mentioned a traumatic and stressful period at the time of offending.

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3.2.5.2. Dangerous World

The offender views the world and people as hostile, aggressive and rejecting. He thinks that others are untrustworthy and may be out to harm him. There are two variants: The offender either perceive all individuals, including children, as hostile and rejecting and believe that the only effective way of dealing with them is to dominate and control them, or they perceive only adults to be dangerous. By comparison a child represents a safe haven and so a preferred sexual partner (Ward, Polaschek & Beech, 2006).

When comparing my data I discovered a common emotion of rejection: rejection from society, from the adult world, from a close friend or life partner. C mentioned: *"My life was totally chaotic at the time and I had to deal with it alone, no one was there to support me"*.

3.2.5.3. Entitlement

The offender feels entitled to this feeling of power, to feel superior in a period of rejection. I just skimmed the surface regarding this issue during my interviews and my observations.

3.2.5.4. Children as Sexual Beings

Before the traumatic period in the respondents lives none of them had been attracted to children before and none had a criminal record. A and C were open about sexual interest in the images and the sexual arousal it gave them. B didn't get any sexual arousal and he didn't view the images in a sexual way.

3.2.5.5. Nature of Harm

According to Ward, Polaschek & Beech (2006) the offenders feel less responsible for their actions and justify it by denying the frequency or description of events arguing that is was educational or consensual.

Throughout the observations and interviews I could sense the embarrassment and guilt from the respondents convictions of what they did and why they did it. It seems harder to perceive the nature of harm to the victim of child pornography as opposed to contact offences. There was a marked difference in the length of time

that each offender had been participating in the intervention programme. Respondent C had participated much longer than respondents A and B and I sensed that he had already passed the stage of denial and was more amenable to acknowledging his behaviour as being deviant.

> "*At the time when I offended I didn't put myself in the child's position, but now I do, and it hurts children. I became aware of the victim when I started the programme (CATTS) and if I put myself on the other side of the camera, I can't say the child was hurt at the time they took the picture but during the circumstances. What was in that persons mind behind the camera at the time the photo was taken? I don't think child pornography is child sexual abuse but I have to*". (C)

A mentioned that the intervention programme made him look at his offence in another way, it made him aware of the victim:

> "*I don't really see child pornography as child sexual abuse, maybe one percent, but I don't see a victim. Through CATTS, I started to see a victim but not that much*". (A)

Respondent B is either living in denial or is very misunderstood. According to him, there was no attraction to children, no sexual arousal from the images downloaded and there was obviously no victim because there was no crime. He admitted that he watched images of naked children and that he came across images of children in sexually explicit positions, but that he deleted them immediately and didn't look at them with sexual interest:

> "*I see child pornography as child sexual abuse because some of the children in the pictures, I could tell, were forced to participate. It's hard for me to talk about some of the images I've seen, they were very bad*".

As mentioned in the literature review the lack of controlling a traumatic or unusual situation in life and the lack of ability to manage negative emotions are psychological factors that could erode internal inhibitions and lead to the abuse a child sexually. The respondents mentioned the embarrassment of the failure of control:

"I'm embarrassed to be so stupid and to do something so wrong. I was very naïve". (B).

Respondent C, said he was glad that he was caught and convicted at that stage because he could not say what would have happened had he not been caught:

"I can't say that I would never abuse a child physical because I don't know". (C)

4. DISCUSSION

My aim was to examine the offenders' self perception and their understanding of child pornography as well as the nature of harm related to child sexual abuse. The core of the study was the empirical material that I analysed with the theoretical framework based on child sexual abuse. To research this very sensitive and emotive phenomenon the respondents through CATTS intervention programme had a self-criticism that was necessary for examining the phenomenon. Taking the offenders' perception and applying psychological aspects I found it important to understand the process through the offenders' eyes in order to come to terms with the problem and its impact. While examining self-perception, I used Fitts & Warrens (1996) Tennessee self-conception scale as a guideline to understand the meaning of self-perception. It has been used as a fundamental principle throughout this study, which I will reflect on in this section.

4.1. Perception of Child Pornography

In my opinion child pornography can have a variety of meanings to individuals who possess, create or/and produce it. However we define child pornography, its role for those involved with it can be quite complex. While sexual fantasy may in one sense lie at the heart of the matter, there are different needs for different individuals and it seems like those needs can change over time. With this statement I refer to the respondents and their period of trauma that was a beginning of their deviant behaviour. While trauma and stress related situations could be a cause for deviant behaviour, I believe the behaviour can decrease and in some way disappear as managing the trauma.

The core quality of any psychological approach to child pornography mentioned, based on preferences of adults with sexual interest in children, will necessarily relate to fantasy. But while fantasy is clearly an element in the distorted cognitions, mentioned above, it strengthened engagement with child pornography. The management of fantasy is something that the law is ill equipped to address. South Africa's legislation is among the toughest in the world, yet the definition of child pornography is very complex and there is still a need for a clearer definition, according to the respondents. Perhaps the primary reason is that when you view a child pornographic image, there has to have been a process of production, which requires that a child be sexually abused in some sense. The production requires the photographer to create a situation where a child is either physically abused or posed in sexualised ways, which is an illegal and appropriate act. The point is that the production of child pornography, is not an act of fantasy, it is an abusive act. The viewer, even though distanced from both the child and the producer, is in a sense aiding and abetting that process by providing a market and for making evident a demand.

I would confidently assert that in general, child pornography is never accidental; it is constructed by the photographer, the child is posed and the actions that take place are planned. And sexual interest is the core of the production of child pornography.

4.2. Understanding his behaviour – Psychologically

I presume the factors in the cognitive distortions theory can change through time. For instance, the deviant behaviour can develop from different factors as, a trauma in life, rejection from adults, drugs, alcohol, stress etc. These are powerful urges and emotions that the offender does not have control over. Frinkelhor's Precondition Model refers to '*overcome internal and external inhibitors*' when, according to him, normally functioning men who experience stressful and unusual situations are unable to meet their sexual and emotional needs in adoptive ways. According to the respondents, they all had a trauma during the time of the offence and they explained that they never offended before or that they had never been attracted to children before. Viewing child pornography necessarily does not have to be based on a lifelong sexual attractiveness of children.

On the other hand, a stressful and an unusual situation could develop an already existing deviant sexual need, such as an attractiveness to children, and that need could be fulfilled by through watching child pornography. Both Seto & Eke (2005) and Russell (1993) suggest that those men who are predisposed to sexually offences most likely show an effect from pornography exposure.

While interviewing I could clearly sense emotions of guilt, regrets and disgrace from the respondents. The search for an answer or a reason why they had these bad fantasies or deviant behaviour was a prominent factor. To develop or possess such inappropriate sexual fantasies, in my opinion, there is a risk of fantasy becoming a reality. According to Seto & Eke (2005) many child pornography offenders are likely to move on to paedophilia. Through interviews as well as observations, I could sense offenders convicted of child pornography distancing themselves from offenders convicted of contact offence thinking that they were not as bad as the contact offenders. I also noticed the differences of attitudes from the respondents, one respondent participated in the intervention programme much longer than the other two and he was more inclined to relate to a victim as well as to an attraction towards children.

Another aspect of relevance is the sex and the internet. As a social being we are influenced by others in our surroundings and in my opinion the internet is a major source that can change our morals and our thinking patterns. According the cognitive distortion theory, once again I would say, that during a stressful or traumatic time, the internet could promote deviant or criminal behaviour. My respondents mentioned the fact that they initially sought adult pornography where ultimately led them to child pornography.

4.3. The Nature of Harm

The respondents' ability to relate to a victim was very vague and sometimes non-existent. Their responses when questioned about the relation of child pornography to child sexual abuse was: "*maybe one percent, not that much*" (A)*, "it was just naked children and nothing sexually*" (B)*, "I don't think it is but I have to etc"* (C). Child sexual abuse and its relation to child pornography are in my opinion

obvious according to the legislation that clearly states what is forbidden and punishable. The psychological factors presented are mainly based on contact child sexual abuse where I relate and advocate the aspects of child pornography. To consider a fantasy as child sexual abuse might be too harsh but when the fantasy is based on the image of a child in a sexually explicit pose there is an obvious relation to child sexual abuse. The fact that the production requires a child to be sexually abused makes the fantasy a phenomenon of abuse. The respondents might think that to view an image is not an act of child sexual abuse but when you consider the process behind the image, the abuse had already taken place and as the viewer, you provide a market for that sexual abuse.

4.4. The same category as paedophiles

Whether or not child pornography offenders should be considered in a category of their own (treatment programme separated from contact offenders) there are some aspects that need to be discussed.

Whether or not possession of child pornography is necessarily a precursor to a contact offence, a number of offenders are coming into the criminal justice system with no apparent history of contact offences (Londt, 2008). If intervention programmes are intended to address the problems offenders present with, there is a need of another or a different approach to therapeutic intervention programmes. If I look at offending behaviour presented in this study in terms of a process rather than a set of attributes, with the dramatic increase in availability and the use of internet in everyday life, there is a question of need for more effective and specific evaluation of individuals. There is a need to focus on the individual, their context and the process related to his offence.

One risk to consider when mixing child pornography offenders with contact offenders in treatment programmes is that they learn from each other. Contact offenders learn about the internet and internet offenders learn about strategies to groom and seduce a child. On the contrary, they could use each others experience and knowledge to prevent relapse.

4.5. Self-conception scale

To understand the meaning of self-perception I used Tennessee self-conception scale as a guideline.

4.5.1. Ethic-Moral

Child pornography is an emotive topic with moral values. The respondents agreed that their behaviour was deviant and inappropriate when articulating emotions such as embarrassment and regret. In any ethical and moral apprehension the offence was taboo, as A, explained it. On the other hand they also agreed that the internet provided a wide market for pornography which seemed to lower their internal moral inhibitions enhancing the excitement and willingness to commit the offence and overcome such strong ethical and moral values.

4.5.2. Personal

Through the psychological aspects, as mentioned above, I reflected over the identified trauma in the respondents lives at the time of offending, they cited as a major reason for the progress of their deviant behaviour. They expressed the need, not to be classified in the same category as paedophiles as B, explained that he could not relate to the paedophiles in the group. While interviewing I sensed that the respondents were searching for plausible reasons to condone their deviant behaviour, they were looking for answers. They denied a prior sexual interest in children and with no earlier criminal record, they saw themselves as ordinary people, with quizzical facial expressions: Why did this happen to me?

4.5.3. Social

The 3 respondents expressed a huge amount of embarrassment in the social context. A, explained that people were treating him as a paedophile. B, expressed embarrassment and humiliation when explaining the criminal record as a social burden.

4.5.4. Physical

Child pornography is an emotive and uncomfortable topic when discussing sexuality and sexual arousal. One respondent denied being sexually attracted to children. In the search for further physical excitement in a society of normalised

sexuality, the internet functions as a tool to satisfy that sexual need. Psychological aspects, as mentioned above, explains the development of this deviant sexual behaviour however, in my opinion, the offender has to overcome *Ethical-Moral, Personal* and *Social* inhibitions before the fantasy becomes a physical action.

4.5.5. Family

The respondents cited the family as the key for moving on. C, explained the need for intimate support throughout the whole process. A and B, mentioned that they had explained their offences at family meetings in the early stages of the process that resulted in them getting the support.

In my opinion, possession of child pornography indicates that the offender has overcome his internal inhibitors and is at risk of overcoming his external inhibitors. If the deviant behaviour is not interrupted at this stage, he could be a high risk for a contact offence.

5. CONCLUSION

Child Pornography is an emotive topic and the discussion tends to touch untreated and sensitive issues where social opinion and moral position become a more important than realistic debate. Maybe this is how it should be when facing disturbing deviant behaviour. Through this study one arrives at a number of conclusions answering the key questions. To come to terms with the problem, its existence and consequences, we need to move out of law enforcement to develop an understanding of child pornography. While interviewing I encountered the problem of a lack of knowledge about the phenomenon among the offenders and the influence of psychological aspects of actually overcoming internal and external inhibitors while viewing child pornography.

During the study it was impossible to resist the essential question: Does the viewing of child pornography lead to contact offences? Though it was not my aim to examine, the question kept immerging throughout the study.

In a social context, maybe the question is: Why has this occurred in the expression of aspects of human sexuality, or should we refer to the recognition of aspects of sexuality that have until now been either ignored or repressed. In my opinion, Child Pornography is not something new but the internet have made the access easier. Those in possession of or in the creation of child pornography show no particular qualities that can identify them as offenders; offenders are, in a sense, just ordinary people.

While considering the psychological aspects of the offender, I came close to humanizing the crime and the understanding of it. I wonder if this would have led to coming close to forgive the offender. In general paedophiles are blacklisted and subjected to enormous moral approbation. In trying to develop a psychological understanding we do run a risk of excusing, hence while researching the phenomenon I had a moral dilemma. Unwittingly, the harsh world of child pornography became clear as prejudice substitutes for reason and hinders the search for a solution. It was not the aim of the study to increase my understanding in order to justify their behaviour. On the contrary, the search for solutions using psychological insights, places the debate within a victim centred perspective, with the aim of developing better and more effective intervention programmes to better protect our children.

In conclusion the following recommendations are suggested:

1. We must develop an understanding of child pornography by also examining the offenders, their intent and their experiences.

2. There is a lack of knowledge about the phenomenon among the offenders that need to be met.

3. Psychological aspects remain tentative and further research is necessary.

4. Engagement with child pornography remains complex and should be addressed in a robust and holistic manner.

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Appendix 1.

CATTS

Child Abuse Therapeutic and Training Services (CATTS) was established by Dr. Marcel Londt in 1988. However, CATTS is a leading programme for the management of sex offenders nationally. The programme provides treatment for sex offenders. The majority of the participants are referrals from court for intervention efforts; only a few individuals are there on a voluntary basis. To participate in the treatment programme the client is first evaluated to establish his/her reception of intervention. If the client is suitable for the programme, an agreement is concluded between the client, the court and CATTS. Treatment at CATTS then becomes part of the clients' sentence. If the client is considered not suitable, a sentence of imprisonment normally ensues.

The clients at CATTS are responsible for bearing the cost of their participation in the intervention programme. A progress report is provided to the court at regular intervals and if there is any breach of the agreement, a very real risk of imprisonment exists.

Dealing with child sex offenders on a regular basis, Dr. Londt believes there is a need for programme involvement, ongoing evaluation and supervision to reduce the likelihood of new victims.

This study is limited, as the empirical material is based on interviews with only three offenders who receive treatment at the CATTS Programme.

Appendix 2.

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Pornography:

1. How old were you when exposed to pornography?
2. What is child pornography?
3. How did you use child pornography?
4. Were you addicted to pornography?
5. How often did you access pornography?
6. How did you watch pornography? TV, DVD rental, DVD purchase, internet or magazines?
7. Do you know in what age group the children you were watching were?
8. Does it appear that any harm was done to the child/woman photographed?
9. Regardless of the fate participants in the pornographic pictures, what is the massage conveyed to view?
10. How dangerous, traumatic, humiliating, painful or unpleasant is the treatment of the people depicted?
11. Are males and females portrayed differently? If so, why?
12. Are female and children portrayed differently? If so, why?
13. Have you ever *wanted* to rape a woman? If so, why?
14. Have you ever *wanted* to rape a child? If so, why?
15. Does pornography make you fantasize of abnormal sex, or do you need pornography to meet your already existing abnormal sexual fantasizing?
16. Do you think its something wrong with *wanting* to rape a woman?
17. Do you think its something wrong with *wanting* to rape a child?
18. Do you think pornography was a cause for you *wanting* to abuse a woman or a child?
19. Do you think pornography caused you to undermine your internal inhibitions against acting out your sexual desire?
20. Do you think pornography caused you to undermine your social inhibitions against acting out your sexual desire?
21. Do you think pornography caused sexual callousness towards women?
22. Do you think pornography caused sexual callousness towards children?
23. Has pornography negatively affected your personal relationships with women?

1. Motivation to sexually abuse:

1.1 What motivated you to overcome your emotional congruence to abuse a child?
1.2 What age did you realized that you were sexual aroused by children?
1.3 What do you think caused the arousal to children?
1.4 Were you personally abused as a child? If yes, what age, by whom, where, how often, nature of assault?
1.5 Have you used sexual activities to control negative emotions, such as, stress, anxious, depression or anger? If so, how?

1.6 Have you ever felt guilty to have sex with an adult? (restrictive sexual norms concerning nature of sexuality and its legitimate expression)

2. Overcoming internal inhibitors:

2.1 At the time of offending, did you make use of alcohol, drugs or any other intoxications?
2.2 At the time of offending, what were your main stress factors in your life?
2.3 Is male sexual violence against women an acceptable behaviour?

3. Overcoming external inhibitors:

3.1 Nature of offence?
a.   Creation of child pornography
b.   Possession of child pornography
c.   Actual sexual assault of a child, if yes, describe relationship with the child
3.2 Have you sexually assault an adult?
3.3 If you could get away with it, would you assault a child? (if this person been sentenced for possession of child pornography "only")

4. Overcoming the resistance of the child

4.1 How did you groom your victims? (if physically abused)
4.2 Describe your strategies to overcome the resistance of the child?
4.3 At what age do you think people should be allowed to consent to sex?
4.4 Do you think that children enjoy sex?
4.5 Do you think children can be damaged from early sexual experiences?
4.6 Do you think you caused any harm to your victims?
4.7 Have you ever used pornography to try to undermine a woman's or a child's resistance?

Law

1. (If you were personally abused as a child, did you report? If yes, what was the reaction? If no, why not?)
2. Is child pornography illegal to just watch, if you don't creating or producing it?
3. Is it illegal to download child pornography from the internet?
4. Do you think the laws should change and that we should respect children's decision around sex?
5. Why do you think child pornography is prohibited?

Appendix 3.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Background information: Age, status, convictions etc.
2. What is your perception of child pornography?
3. How were you treated by the law?
4. How do you see yourself after the conviction?
5. How would you comment sexual offence against children?
6. Anything else you want me to know about?